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Minuteman III Mk 12A info  
IMPORTANT  
VANDENBERG  
ACTION

Dan Ellsberg

Dan -

Here is some documentation in relation to our December talk about the advanced Mk 12A Minuteman III retrofitting. I checked on your idea that only 50\* Minuteman IIs can be replaced by Minuteman III Mk 12A's. According to Robert Aldridge in The Counterforce Syndrome both MM II and MM III are listed with the same range:

7000 miles +, which puts virtually every part of the USSR within range. I think this is very critical in the whole first-strike discussion. I would like to talk it over more with you in the near future.

Thank you very much for speaking here today. You've helped out a lot. Hope to speak with you soon. - Peter



## Soviet Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles

The Soviets also have been working on two new submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and construction of new, more capable submarines of the "Delta" class is continuing. The new missiles are the SS-N-17 and SS-N-18 SLBMs. The SS-N-17 has apparently been a failure and has been fitted only onto one older "Yankee" class missile submarine. The SS-N-18 will probably be the mainstay of the Soviet SLBM force. It is currently in place on 10 Delta III submarines, and more Delta-IIIs are being built. The SS-N-18 carries three MIRVs with yields estimated at 1-2 megatons. Soviet SLBMs are not very accurate—the SS-N-18's CEP is probably no better than half a mile, which makes it ineffective as a counterforce weapon. The long range of the SS-N-18, perhaps up to 5,000 miles, allows it to be fired from waters close to the U.S.S.R. where U.S. anti-submarine warfare (ASW) is relatively limited and where Soviet forces can offer some protection. Only about 15% of Soviet missile submarines are at sea at any one time, however, and

U.S. ASW techniques have made great strides recently, which makes the Soviet SLBM force vulnerable to attack. The SS-N-18 also can be fired from submarines in port, though such submarines are easy targets.

## Other New Soviet Programs

The Soviets do produce cruise missiles—some are now deployed on several old submarines and on surface ships and others have been tested on airplanes. Almost all are for naval missions, and only one model and a new successor can go over 70 miles. The longer range systems are very large (almost the size of a small fighter plane), and have relatively primitive guidance systems—the newest model is effective only for a 300 mile range. No information is publicly available about Soviet efforts to develop strategic cruise missiles comparable to the new American designs.

There is some evidence that the Soviets are working on a new long-range bomber.

### The New Generation at a Glance

Weapon	Date of Deployment	Payload	CEP	Single Shot Kill Probability	# Planned
Minuteman-3 w/Mk 12A warhead	1981	3 x 350 kt	600 ft.	.72	300
	1985	3 x 350 kt	300 ft.	.98	300 ← 550 + 50 = 600
M-X	1986	10 x 350 kt	300 ft.	.98	200 by 1990
		10 x 500 kt	300 ft.	.99	200 by 1990
Trident I	1981	8 x 100 kt	1500 ft.	.10	176
Trident II	1988	14 x 150 kt	300 ft.	.92	456
ALCM	1981	1 x 200 kt	100 ft.	.99+*	2400 to 3000 by 1986
SS-17	1979	4 x 550 kt	1500 ft.	.25	100
	1983	4 x 550 kt	600 ft.	.81	150
SS-18	1979	8 x 600 kt	1500 ft.	.27	200
	1983	8 x 600 kt	600 ft.	.83	308
SS-19	1979	6 x 550 kt	1500 ft.	.25	310
	1983	6 x 550 kt	600 ft.	.81	360
SS-N-18	1979	3 x 1Mt (?)	3000 ft.	.15	144
	future	3 x 1Mt (?)	1500 ft.	.35	(?)

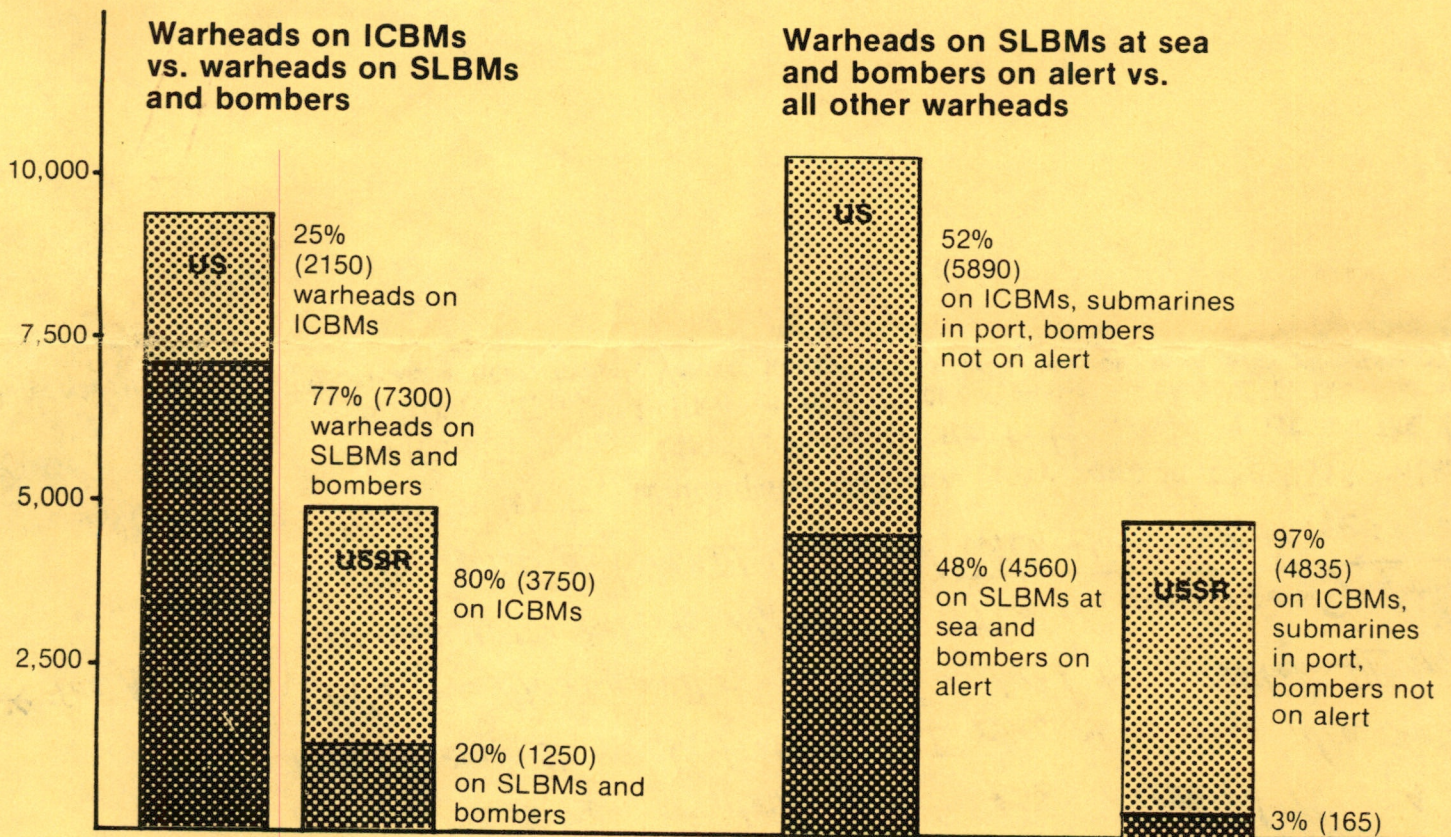
\*Not useful against "time urgent targets."

**Abbreviations:** KT: Kilotons Mt: Megatons CEP: Circular Error Probable

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## Percentage of US and Soviet Forces Vulnerable to Attack



Source: Center for Defense Information

## Conclusion

The most enduring myth of the arms race is that more nuclear weapons make us more secure. The action-reaction cycle of the arms race, by which each side matches the programs of the other, has long made that notion suspect. Even while the U.S. nuclear arsenal has grown more and more powerful, the United States itself has never been more vulnerable to destruction from growing Soviet nuclear strength. The development of counterforce weapons undermines the myth in another way. The more threatening the American counterforce arsenal is to the Soviet Union, the more likely the Soviets are to act in a crisis by using their nuclear weapons first, before they can be destroyed in the ground. A world in which the superpowers take deadly aim at each other with weapons which threaten to leave the other side unable to retaliate, is a world of dangerous anxieties and some very itchy trigger fingers. Whatever the Soviet Union does, therefore, the United States is more secure without a vast new counterforce arsenal.

But what about the Russians? Haven't they been building up their own counterforce arsenal, and isn't that threatening to the United States? Don't they seem to be seeking military superiority? Can the United

States afford to stand still and let the military balance turn against it? There is no doubt that the Soviet Union has invested heavily in recent years in building up its strategic nuclear arsenal. And it has made a lot of progress—its new land-based missiles are very threatening. If the Soviets are as serious about detente as they claim to be, they will have to show some sensitivity to the negative impressions which their strategic programs create in the West.

That being said, the alarms being spread about supposed Soviet strategic advantages are wholly out of place. The United States has not been standing still in the nuclear arms race, and we are not heading toward a dangerous period of relative strategic inferiority. Quite the contrary, the pursuit of all the new weapons now on Pentagon drawing boards would be far more threatening to the Soviet Union than any programs the Soviets have on line could possibly be to us. The strategic nuclear balance is not tipping dramatically against the West. Instead, there is a great deal of room for the United States to pursue policies designed to reduce tension, control the new technologies, and prevent a new and extraordinarily dangerous stage of the arms race. And any number of